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Chief, Economic Research Area, ORR

24 May 1956

ATTN :

Support Staff, ORR 25X1A9a

Chief, Industrial Division, ORR

Comment on Vital Materials Staff Study.

I. The following observations are intended for use in the coordinated comment from the Economic Area on [REDACTED] staff study on the Vital Materials Repository (VMR).

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I. The suggestion that consideration be given to the storage of Division contributions to NIE's, NIS's, and other support materials is strongly endorsed. Much of the material assembled on the branch and division level in ERA is not included in the published reports. These unpublished items represent, in theory, the complete presentation on a subject. Publication, either as a separate report, or a part of a national estimate sometimes excludes many items of value to the working analyst because of the particular needs of the publication consumer. This is especially true in the NIE program and is partly the case in the NIS program and in other established research patterns.

While it is impossible to designate the multitude of materials in the above category it is possible to recommend that the VMR program be geared in with the NIE and NIS program at the Coordinator level rather than at any higher echelon.

II. This Division agrees that the currency of the material is paramount in the VMR program and recommends that a VMR function be specifically listed as a part of the duties of each ERA Branch Chief.

III. Hard copy materials are certainly less of a problem for the researcher but the increasing size of the VMR program probably dictates the use of microfilm. If the latter is used there should be a provision for quick reproduction of microfilm frames. The use of microfilm readers is considered most unsatisfactory for any lengthy research project.

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IV. The use of the IPI system is not adequate alone for this program. (See I. above). The possibility also exists that the VMR could eventually have many different indexing systems with the probable saturation point of a maze of indexes. Each system has many good features but a central master index with appropriate cross-referencing must be developed.

V. In addition to the reproduction equipment mentioned, (see III. above) it is recommended that other mechanical aids such as thermofax machines, auto-stat units, and engineer drawing equipment be secured for the VMR Center.

VI. Personnel briefed on the VMR program should include all echelons to at least the branch level and consideration should even be given to briefing all professionals without regard to their administrative or research function. Nearly all of the professional people of ERA are working on a very high and sensitive security level. Under these circumstances a lack of knowledge on the VMR program hardly seems appropriate.

VII. Comment on the storage of special material is limited to the index problem. Any index prepared should be incorporated in a central index. (See IV. above).

2. The remarks listed above under the guides set by St/S endorse the staff study. The main theme of these comments is that if the VMR program is essential, and it is, then adequate finances should be provided and added emphasis should be given to publicising the program.

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